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THE FULNESS
OF
THE SPIRIT
BY
THE REV. A. MC MILLAN.



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THE
FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT,

BY THE
REV. ARCHIBALD MC MILLAN.

The Fulness of the Spirit,

TOGETHER WITH
SOME ASPECTS OF HIS WORK AS DWELLING
WITHIN THE BELIEVER.

BY THE
REV. ARCHIBALD McMILLAN.

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London.*



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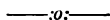
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THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO HIS FLOCK,
WITH DEEP THANKFULNESS
TO GOD
FOR EIGHT YEARS' MINISTERIAL SUCCESS AND COMFORT,
AND FOR MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS
FROM AN ATTACHED PEOPLE,
BY THE AUTHOR.

London, April 2nd, 1870.

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INTRODUCTION.



THE design of this book is to awaken increased attention to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, together with some special aspects of His work, in believers. The doctrine of the Spirit, in His unfolding of the loving purposes of God, and in the application of the work of Christ to the heart, is received by all evangelical Christians without question; yet judging from the testimony very generally received, as well as from one's own observation and experience, the doctrine of the Spirit has not that prominence in the ministry of the present day which is assigned to it in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles of the New Testament. Nor, if one may judge from the writings of the great divines of the sixteenth century, is the Spirit's work now dwelt upon as it was in their times, and in those immediately preceding them. Special attention was called to His particular office and work in each of the three great evangelical eras clearly traceable in the Church of Christ in England. The Reformers preached the Gospel with great power and with marked success. Many persons of all classes were savingly

enlightened, and the great majority of the nation were made to feel themselves to be in the presence of an unusual power which extended, it is said, even to the monarch and her ministers. The Christian student has no hesitation in ascribing this to a fuller manifestation of the Holy Spirit in connection with the ministry of the word.

This revival was succeeded, at a considerable interval, by the Puritan awakening which, in the words of the late Dr. James Hamilton in "Our Christian Classics," "for grand and enduring results was for a time the most wonderful revival Europe ever witnessed." This again was followed by the revival with which the names of Whitfield, Romaine, Berridge, Rowland Hill, John Newton, Venn and the two Wesleys stand closely and honourably connected. Each of these three periods was marked by the presence of the Holy Ghost, making the Gospel as preached the power of God unto the salvation of many. And nothing is wanting in this age but the fulness of the Spirit in all who occupy our pulpits and our pews, to secure a universal quickening of the life of believers, and the salvation of vast numbers who at present are "without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world."¹

It would seem to have been a part of the revelation of

¹ Ephes. ii. 12.

the Divine Charity to our world that the person and work of the Spirit should be progressively revealed. This is seen to have been the case in both the Old and New Testaments, though less clearly traced in the former than in the latter. Confining our remarks to the New Testament, it may be observed in confirmation of this view of the revelation of the Spirit, that He is gradually introduced to notice in the first three Gospels, more fully so in the Gospel of John, which is the latest of the four; but in them all He is revealed as the Spirit of promise. In the Acts of the Apostles, which has been called "The Gospel of the Spirit," His presence and power are everywhere asserted. In all the Epistles of Paul His office and work are fully recognized, whilst everything that is pure, and lovely and of good report in the experience and character of the Church of Christ, is traced immediately to Him. In the main group of his Epistles, comprising the 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Corinthians, the Galatians and the Romans, there is very frequent and direct reference to the ministry of the Spirit, more in the Epistle to the Romans than the rest of the group, possibly because of its more systematic character. But as the leading error which the Apostle sought to combat in these times, was the infection of Judaism which virtually set aside our Lord's work as a priest and sacrifice for sin, he gives special prominence to the doctrine of justification by faith

in Christ. In the second group of his Epistles, comprising the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Ephesians, written when he knew, by personal contact and inspection, the licentiousness of heathenism, especially in Europe, he, whilst not overlooking the place which the atonement must ever have in the ministry of the word, and in the faith and life of the Church, brings out with greater fulness and particularity the work of the Spirit as a convincing and sanctifying power. It has been well said that "the Epistles are nearer actual life than the Gospels. They relate to the circumstances of the first believers, to their struggles with the world without, to their temptations and divisions from within. Their subject is not only the doctrines of the Christian religion, but the business of the early Church." In them the writer urges his brethren everywhere to have a firm faith in Christ, at the same time he sets before them the Holy Spirit in His relation to the Redeemer as the ever present source of their life and sanctification, and therefore entitled to have in their thoughts and affections the place due to the last and highest manifestation of deity.

With these views of the different groups of the Epistles of Paul, and their relation to the everyday life of the Christian, I have been led to examine the place which the Spirit has assigned to Him *in the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians*; whilst at the same time I have

endeavoured to amplify and confirm the views found in that Epistle by a reference to some of the others, especially the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans.

Each chapter of this little book is intended to be complete in itself, though it is hoped that they all may prove to have that natural connection with each other, which forms a complete whole.

The Church is rich in sacred works upon the Spirit;¹ but I do not know any work which has treated the subject precisely in the form attempted here; and therefore, commending it to the benediction of God, I venture to address it, deeply conscious of its crude and incomplete character, first, to my own kind people, and beyond them, to all who may give it a kindly welcome and perusal.

London, April 2, 1870.

¹ One of the ablest books in any language upon the person and work of the Spirit is, unquestionably, Archdeacon Hare's "Mission of the Comforter." No theological library can be regarded as complete without it, and therefore, without committing myself to all its views, I would commend its careful perusal to all students. It does not, except in the most incidental manner, treat of the views of the Spirit which I have endeavoured to set forth here. The great and good Dr. John Owen has, throughout his voluminous writings, several chapters, and many single passages on the work of the Spirit, marked by his peculiar scripturalness and fulness of treatment, which

will amply reward the patient reader. I may refer also to the Congregational Lecture on "The Work of the Spirit" by my late lamented and esteemed tutor, Dr. Stowell.

Long after the chapter on the Spirit as a seal was written, and when I had looked in vain for information on a point referred to at page 59, the following note in Bickersteith's "The Spirit of Life," p. 176, a most excellent treatise, published by the Religious Tract Society, came under my view, which I have much pleasure in transcribing, as bearing on my subject:—

"The allusion to the seal as a pledge of purchase would be peculiarly intelligible to the Ephesians, for Ephesus was a maratime city, and an extensive trade in timber was carried on there by the shipmasters of the neighbouring ports. The method of purchase was this: the merchant, after selecting his timber, stamped it with his own signet, which was an acknowledged sign of ownership. He often did not carry off his possession at the time; it was in the harbour with other floats of timber; but it was chosen, bought, and in due time the merchant sent a trusty agent with the signet, who, finding that timber which bore a corresponding impress, claimed and brought it away for the master's use. Thus the Holy Spirit impresses on the soul now the image of Jesus Christ; and this is the sure pledge of the everlasting inheritance."

THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT.



CHAPTER I.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”—Ephs. v. 18.

THIS familiar phrase is the implied promise of far richer spiritual blessings than we Christians in this age enjoy. It is affirmed of many members of the Early Church that they were full of the Holy Ghost;¹ a great privilege which is urged upon all believers as an incumbent duty: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”²

The apostle wrote the letter to the Ephesians in which this passage occurs, to put them in possession of a fact of which God had

¹ Acts vi. 3-5: xi. 24.

² Ephs. v. 18

made him the sole repository: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel."¹

As this grace of God was already made known unto them, and they were rejoicing in its power, the apostle aims by further instruction, guidance, and exhortation to elevate and qualify them for the privileges and responsibilities of their new position. There were evil courses which they must avoid, over which he lingers² with a mournful pathos as the lower and debased side of human nature, from which they had been rescued. There was a lofty, pure, ripe Christian life which they should strive to attain;³ and he dwells

¹ Ephs. iii, 2-5.² Ephs. iv.³ Ephs. v.

as with paternal fondness and Christian enthusiasm on this as the blessedness and safety of their Christian state. These two parts of human life—the one under earthly and debasing influences, and the other under a divine power—are forcibly described in the remarkable words quoted : “ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit.”

The two clauses of the sentence are put in marked antagonism. They show that there are two great forces acting upon us. The one is based on external things, and acts on our physical nature : “ Be not drunk with wine.” The other is revealed in the Scriptures, and acts upon our spiritual nature : “ Be filled with the Spirit.” These two, wine and the Holy Spirit, represent two classes of influences which serve to stimulate mightily our nature.

1. The wine in itself influences and arouses to boiling pitch the passions with which God has endowed us, and at the same time stupi-

fies the nobler faculty of reason, and drowns the voice of conscience. For all stimulants which thus act on our physical and lower nature convey to our soul the influence, and impart the character, of our lower debased parts. The mind becomes fleshly, carnal, sensual, having not the Spirit. The mind is darkened. The immortal life of the Spirit is alienated from the life of God, the heart is hardened, and the whole inner man which was made at first to respond to the gentlest influences of God, is now past feeling. Wine is not the only thing that acts thus injuriously upon our nature ; it is but the representative of many others. Gambling, as practised in many places on the continent, in the gold market of New York, and at home on the race-course, the card, and billiard room, in the cotton market, and on the stock exchange, seems to intoxicate men and lead them, in feverish excitement, to stake their fortune, and possibly their character, on a single act. In those sad places of amusement also which are found

in the Metropolis and in all our great cities, where the address or appeal of the entertainers is simply to man's sinful nature, the mind is excited through the lower powers, so that it also becomes debased. In all such cases the influence is of an injurious nature, and, alas ! often under its excess, character, fortune, health, and life itself, are risked and lost. Paul's earnest appeals, summed up in these words, " And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess," condemn whilst they guard us against all such earthly sensuous influences. Many habits of modern society merit the most sweeping condemnation, and should be shunned by every thoughtful person because of that spirit of the world which worketh death.

In marked antagonism to this Paul shews that our spiritual nature is susceptible of an equal stimulus with quite a different result. The soul can receive and become the theatre of the Holy Spirit's operations ; can receive the influence of the perpetual indwelling of Jesus Christ ; is acted upon and strengthened with

all might by the Spirit in the inner man ; may be filled with all the fulness of God ; and may be the possessor of divine love which passeth knowledge, and of joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. These are all active and vital forces given for the very purpose of impressing and stimulating our souls. They are all good ; character, fortune, health, usefulness, and salvation are all preserved by them. A man under their benignant influence grows in grace and true greatness. They are not destructive, but nutritious forces. He can bear them forty years constantly, and sleep well, eat well, and work well. . How different the character and course of those who willingly expose their souls to the class of influences which are in marked antagonism to these powers of the Spirit and of the Gospel of Christ !

There is no reason to suppose that any of the Ephesian Christians were addicted to the evil practices which the Apostle condemns. The reference to them is partly to guard his

brethren against them, and partly to impress them with the value of the fulness of the Spirit. He is seeking to lift them to the conception and enjoyment of the purest and noblest christian character and life which is so fully pourtrayed in this epistle. His teaching is thrown into sentences, the one member of which is antagonistic to the other, to give point and meaning to it. Moreover, he is denouncing in the words, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess,"—the very common and deadly vice of intemperance, which has ruined, and is ruining, vast numbers, both in Heathen and Christian countries. Ephesus, a great commercial city, divided its favours between Diana, and Bacchus the god of wine. "The women of Ephesus as the priestesses of Bacchus, danced immodestly round the chariot of Mark Anthony, when he entered their city. Alexander the Great, who himself died a sacrifice to drink and not to war, offered a prize to the man who could drink most wine at a sitting, and thirty of the

competitors died. Plato boasted of the quantity of wine which Socr tes could take without injury. Xenocrates, the philosopher, received from Dionysius a golden crown for drinking a gallon of wine at a draught. The leading literary men of Ephesus, to refer again to her citizens, were notorious for their foolish jesting when under the influence of wine. Hipponox, one of them, said, "There are two happy days in man's life, one when he gets a wife, the other when he buries her." The Apostle seems to be referring in this letter to such sad things "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, let them not be once named among you, as becometh Saints." "And be not drunk with wine."¹ How unlike the things which I have quoted was the genial pure soul of Paul who was often dissolved in tears, and who, possibly with allusion to the coarse joke of the philosopher, has in the beautiful words of the Epistle hal-

¹ Ephes. v. 3-4-11-12-15-18.

lowed the marriage state: "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it."¹

2. The contrast serves to show the mighty stimulus of the Holy Spirit in the soul. If we are to be filled with the Spirit He must be in us and acting upon us. To all persons in every age the question "What is it that moves thought in the human soul?" has presented itself for solution. We are powerfully excited by the physical world acting upon our delicate and susceptible organism. The society which we move in excites us. We are recipients of influences always acting upon us, moving as we do in the midst of a vast circuit of stimulating power, from a great variety of causes. No better example could be found of the existence and character of such influences than the first example of this operation and effect. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good

¹ Ephes. v. 25.

for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her ; and he did eat.”¹ The Bible, without ignoring such mighty influences on the soul, teaches us that it lies open especially to the action of the Holy Spirit. No small part of the Redeemer’s enlightening and comforting ministry was to teach his apostles and the Church the doctrine, and he gave the Spirit to dwell in them and to act upon them. The Spirit acts freely on the Christian’s soul, because he is God. Christ’s own words are, “The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.”² He is not a visitor, here to day and gone to-morrow. He does not pay us periodical visits, bringing us fresh gifts every separate time. He is a principle of life abiding in the soul, essentially different

¹ Gen. iii. 6.² John xiv. 17.

from that life, yet acting upon it, enlightening it, elevating it, and strengthening it. As He is thus in us a living person, He must not be confounded with a mere influence, nor narrowed down to the much vaunted enthusiasm of humanity. He is the Spirit of Truth leading us into the knowledge of the word: the Spirit of holiness producing in our heart and life the fruits, peculiar to himself, of love, peace, joy, tenderness; the Spirit of comfort quickening us by his "everlasting consolation and a good hope through grace."¹ There are different measures of this light, and influence, and power. We are required to be filled with the Spirit. The word rendered "Be ye filled," and all such as spring from it, are favourite words with the Apostle. The word is somewhat representative of the Epistle which may be characterized by largeness. Everything is on a large scale, yet no inflation of language, or mere rhetorical flourish; but the writer's great thoughts are given with

¹ *Thess. ii. 16.*



intense earnestness and fervour, and clothed in words and images like the wealth of the harvest field when it bears a hundred-fold. One of its main thoughts was the equality of the Gentile with the Jew since the revelation of the mystery long hidden in God's mind. His ancient people demurred to this at first, and proudly said, "We are the favoured nation ; His Temple is among us ; the Temple of the Lord are we ; and of course filled with His glory." Observe how Paul meets this objection which he knew they entertained. He declares by special revelation, that Gentile saints "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." ¹ He prays that Christ may dwell in them by faith,

¹ Ephes. ii. 19-22.

and that they might be filled with all the fulness of God. The ancient Temple was filled with the smoke and the glory of the Lord. Christians, as living temples, are filled with the love of God, the life of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. This idea of largeness, of being filled and elevated, runs through the whole Epistle. He aims at leading them to know "what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance with the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set him at His right hand in heavenly places.¹ Now he shows that we are lifted from the low condition of children of wrath, to be seated with Christ in heavenly places, that in the ages to come God might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." He preached to the

¹ Ephes. i. 18-20.

Gentiles the *unsearchable* riches of Christ, riches of life, thought, feeling, peace, joy, and hope, and he endeavoured to lead them so to think and feel that they might "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." ¹ And in a sublime strain of praise to the Almighty he teaches that He can give us a fulness of life and peace beyond the reach of language or the grasp of thought.

At the incarnation of Christ His fulness of life manifested itself. So it was at the effusion which took place at the day of Pentecost, that the Spirit poured forth all His fulness of life and light and power. His fulness of *life* may be regarded both as *intensified* life, filling us with His special energy ; and as *diffusive* life sweeping over and filling up the capacities of our nature. The influence may be regarded

¹ Ephes. i. 18-20.² Ephes. ii.

first as intensive, for besides the general moral influences which come quietly, and we know not how or when, distilling as it were like the dew in silence and darkness, there is the active energy of the spirit arousing, filling, and impelling our souls. The Holy Spirit is in us ; gives Himself to us ; acts directly, and also through the truth, upon our minds and hearts ; and yet remains quite separate in essence from us. He came mightily upon Prophets, Priests, Kings, and Apostles, and stirred their powers into holy enthusiasm. Still it is a great truth for all in every age, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." ¹ As the quiet, continuous, and genial heat of the sun melts the ice, when the south wind blows softly, so the Spirit under the ministry of the truth, melts and opens the human heart. It is said of Lydia hearing the word, "Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the

¹ Acts i. 8.

things which were spoken of Paul." ¹ Or as mighty winds rock the trees, wrenching their parts asunder, or tearing them up by the roots, so the Spirit sometimes moves men in the lowest depths of their nature, filling them, convincing them, impelling them. Men so under His power seem to others beside themselves, as when Paul appeared to Festus mad through his much learning. Wine intoxicates; men may be filled with it; they cannot habitually live under its power; the influence is spasmodic and its fumes die away. Again they drain the wine-cup to drown the feeling of despondency. They fly from themselves to the wine, driven by a craving which they themselves can neither satisfy nor resist. They are filled and affected by it. We say that an earnest teacher, whose sympathetic nature opens to the pupil, imparts his own spirit to the pupil. In the heat of battle a bold and brave commander gives his spirit and

¹ Acts xvi, 14.

infuses himself into the men. He pierces and animates the souls of the men with the loyalty, daring, and enthusiasm which are his own. All these things are allowed to be of common occurrence ; and it is further allowed that a man under these influences is more than himself, carried beyond himself, is greater than himself. Can we deny this influence to the active, energetic, mighty power of the Holy Spirit in man ? For remember when and of whom it was said, " These men are full of new wine." ¹

His fulness is also to be regarded as *diffusive*, sweeping over and filling up all the capacities of our nature. This may be illustrated by the words of the Lord in Isaiah : " As the waters cover the sea." The bed of the sea is marked by deep valleys, awful chasms, and by rough-rising ground, and rocks reaching within but a little way of its restless surface. And yet the waters fill them all

¹ Acts ii. 13.

and cover them all over! "Be ye filled with the Spirit." There are different measures of the Spirit's life. There is little of His life in us, or more than a little, or a repletion. He is differently felt and enjoyed by the believer, in whom He is as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life, and out of whose heart He flows like rivers of living water; from him by whom He is grieved, though such a backslider may be sealed by Him unto the day of redemption. Or, if we take the experience of the same believer for a length of time, the progress of his spiritual life, quickened and informed by the Holy Ghost, has never been perfectly uniform. It has its periods of alternations, and like the tide it ebbs and flows; has its nights and days; winter and summer; and instead of growing and waxing in vigour, it waxes and wanes. In the post-apostolic ages of the Church, in the middle ages, and immediately before the Reformation of the sixteenth century, long years of sleep, and times of comparative barrenness,

passed over the Church because God's people grieved away His spirit. His coming in the effusion of Pentecost filled them on whom He came. The very last promise made by Jesus to His disciples was the re-assertion of His coming. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." ¹ "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And the fulfilment of the promise is declared in these words: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The first Deacons of the Church were to be "men full of the Holy Ghost;" clearly shewing that this possession was then an ordinary thing. And we read that Stephen, Barnabas, and others were "Good men full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." We who live in this day of the full blaze of Gospel light, and are called to a higher Christian life by the many doors of usefulness opened for us, will fall far below our duty if we do not pray and strive

¹ Acts i. 5-8; ii. 4; vi. 3; xi. 24.

for this fulness of the Spirit as a vivifying and animating power on the spiritual faculties of our nature. These faculties may be extraordinarily heightened; our power of discerning amazingly increased; our energy in work greatly intensified. We should then be strengthened with strength in our souls. A glow and vigour would mark all our work, whilst the effectual and fervent prayer inspired by Him who maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, would secure for us and with us His gracious presence and benediction, who has said "I will be as the dew unto Israel."¹

¹ Hosea xiv. 5.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.



CHAPTER II.

“The Fruit of the Spirit.”—Ephes. v. 9.

HIGH religious privileges have correspondently high religious obligations. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”¹ The vine-dresser expects grapes not on thorns, but on the vine. The Apostle had in the earlier part of this letter to the Ephesians, portrayed the privileges of the believer with a fulness, both in principle and detail, which is peculiar to this epistle. From his description we learn that even during our present state of incompleteness, and notwithstanding all human imperfections, we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places

¹ Luke xii. 48.

in Christ," ¹ whilst in the future as the result of divine culture and fatherly discipline, we are to reach a condition absolutely without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but we shall be holy and without blemish." ² The guarantee for this is the privilege of being filled with the Spirit. This was the subject of the preceding chapter, and without trenching on ground then gone over, this chapter starts from the point reached in the previous one.

The Spirit in His fulness of intensity and measure, dwells in us. One of two possible results may flow from this, either, a careless Christian walk which the Apostle cautions all against in an earnest appeal which closes with these words: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;" ³ or, by cherishing and obeying the Spirit, His in-dwelling may manifest itself by our life and char-

¹ Ephes. i. 3; ² v. 27. ³ Ephes. iv. 30.

after becoming adorned “with the fruits of righteousness.” “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”

1. How does the Holy Spirit produce fruit in us? It is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the effect of the Spirit from the action of our own spirit, so as to say when one ceases to work and the other begins, or to separate the two almost at any time. In producing and ripening in us the fruits of godliness, the Spirit works in and through our own faculties. He must be held to be ever distinct from, and superior to our Spirits. He comes into them, and coalesces with them. He removes very much from them, and brings very much into them. The young man born blind had all the faculties of body and mind needed to go about business, which other persons had, excepting sight; that given then all seemed new. The fallow-field on which the cattle browse may have in it all the conditions of a harvest a hundred-fold; it only

wants to be ploughed, harrowed, and the seed given to it, to yield fruit in abundance. Our spirits, apart from the Holy Ghost, are much as the blind man, and the fallow field, are in themselves ; but when filled with the Spirit, they have that which answers to light in the man whose eyes were opened, and to seed in the fallow field when cultivated and fruitful.

We are not to suppose that God's Spirit is in any such sense creative, as that he creates new faculties, or any powers of mind that have a faculty of ministration. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, but that is the creation of new principles. Life, faith, hope, peace, holiness, self-denial, kindness, and love, are given ; but the channels through which they flow are already in us, and have to be opened, and cleansed and filled by the fruit of the Spirit. The reservoir amid the distant hills may be full of water for the supply of a city, and the pipes may be all laid ; but the water must be turned on and the pipes clear in order to secure the needed supply.

The mind in darkness may be relieved by the Spirit lifting the darkness away, as the sun lifts away the darkness of the night. Both mind and body may be locked in sound sleep, but when you arouse the man, sleep departs, and his powers so recently dormant are now active as with fresh life. "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." ¹ We have seen the hand and fingers tightly holding some object; the fingers are lifted up one by one by another and stronger hand; the grip is gone and the object is free. So the Holy Ghost seems to loose the hold which the world and sin have of the human soul, and sets it free. Then He brings the fulness of spiritual intelligence, life, and peace into its liberated powers. "If the Son, therefore," through this work of the Spirit, "shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." ² In this work of the Spirit there is an immense deliverance and clearance, and

¹ Ephes. v. 14.² John viii. 36.

at the same time also an infusion of new principles, and motives, and ends. "Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."¹ Our souls freed from ignorance and from the grief and power of sin, and led to look to Christ, are filled full of exalted thoughts and feelings. The Spirit of God does not think or feel or act for us, but enables us to think and feel and act as those who are born again. The old Earth that lay asleep in the embrace of cold, frost and snow, is delivered from the incubus of these paralyzing powers, and, renewed by the genial breath of spring, is filled with life and covered with greenness; flooded with sunlight, and vocal with the singing of birds. Such illustrations, allowing for the imperfection of all physical images, when used to illustrate spiritual truth, give point to this aspect of the Spirit's work, "which delivers us from the powers of darkness and translates us into the kingdom of God's

¹ Cor. v. 17.

dear Son," when we are gifted with a new nature and "all things that pertain to life and godliness."¹

2. The result of this work in the believer as felt in himself and as seen in his life, is named "the fruit of the Spirit;" fruit, not works. There is a perfect and beautiful uniformity in Paul's writings in designating the results which are peculiar respectively to the flesh, and to the Spirit. He writes always "the *works* of the flesh," but "the *fruit* of the Spirit." By the former we understand the thoughts which spring from a life power of evil in the soul, and are embodied in the words and deeds of man, as he is filled, and ruled, and impelled by sin; by the latter phrase we understand that cluster of spiritual graces which, as seen in patient suffering, hatred of sin, endurance of temptation, holy activities in going about doing good, visiting the sick, the fatherless and widows in their affliction,

¹ Coloss. i. 13; ii. Pet. 1-3.

and keeping oneself unspotted from the world,¹ adorn the Christian.

Fruit is used in preference to works, in relation to the Spirit, with reference to the reward which Christ bestows of grace upon the faithful, which reward is itself the fruit of the Spirit, and not the work of man. In the service of sin the toil is so great that in comparison thereof the benefit flowing from its drudgery is as nothing: in the service of God the benefit is so great that in comparison thereof the labour in Christ is as nothing. When the flesh rules, all the work exceeds the fruit so much that it is all called work—the work of the flesh; when the Spirit rules, all the fruit exceeds the work so much that, without mentioning the work, it is called fruit—“the fruit of the Spirit.” Hence the sinful works of man are designated “the unfruitful works of darkness.” “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye now are ashamed?”²

¹ James i. 27.

² Ephes. v. 11; Rom. vi. 21.

The apostle who, at other times and in all proper seasons, insists on good works as the genuine fruit of spiritual life,¹ is not putting his thoughts, in the words which have led to these observations, in that form precisely. He is seizing firmly and internally, if I may so say, the fruits of the Spirit. He is seeking the ripening and consummation of our own regeneration and sanctification. As the cluster of grapes is no doubt the glorified form and complete manifestation of the branch, so fruit unto holiness is no doubt the complete exhibition of Christian life, and the way wherein we can do that great thing—glorify God. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”² The Lord does not say, or mean that we should understand Him as even implying, in this passage—so shall ye be very active, useful, and, by abiding in me and working from me as the centre of life and

¹ Titus iii. 8. ² John xv. 8.

quickenings, make many disciples. That will come by-and-by. The thing aimed at in having this internal fruit of the Spirit is, first of all, that believers may in themselves, and of themselves, as filled with the Spirit, answer to, and be Christ's disciples.

3. We are to bear much fruit ; and still this is to be the fruit of the Spirit. It is to be manifested in our acts, words, and works, must grow in us and upon us, and at the same time not to be of us, so much as of the Spirit. He puts His grace, with the seed of the Kingdom, into our hearts, nourishes the spiritual principle produced by them in us, ripens it, and brings it unto perfection. He supplies the motive power in us, and breathes the all-quickenings and maturing influence. We are to bear much fruit ; but, clearly, without Him we can do nothing.

Two things are to be noticed : first, that he places in our souls the precious facts and truths of the Scripture, which, under his power, germinate and flourish in Christian

life: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree;" and secondly, that he receives the things that are Christ's, and shews them unto us;¹ reveals Christ himself in us as our life, our power, and our hope.

In this way he destroys in us the love and the power of sin as at one blow—making the inner life to correspond with the Lord's image of an honest and good heart; whilst to the happy consciousness of the believer he sheds abroad the love of God in his regenerated and humble heart.² Indeed, as we saw in the last chapter, the apostle, when speaking of the soul filled with the Spirit, seemed as if he would put more into his words than they well could carry, in saying that heaven had emptied itself into the heart of the believer; so here he represents a productive power working in us, doing for us more than we are able to ask or think, and whose source of supply to us is the fulness of God.

¹ Psalm xcii. 12-13; John xvi. 14.

² Luke viii. 15; Rom. v. 5.

4. The fruits are represented as revealing themselves "in all goodness and righteousness and truth." In the Galatians they are given somewhat more in detail:—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."¹

But preferring the brief description of them by the same writer in the Ephesians for my purpose, they are (1) "*in all goodness.*" This word goodness is one of the few words with which revealed religion has enriched the Greek language. That language in all its literature, and with all its completeness, had no word which could express what we now understand by goodness as the fruit of the Spirit in the believing soul. Not knowing the grace of goodness, how could they express it? The writers of the New Testament coined the word. It includes the ideas of benevolence, gentleness, and self-control. It is gentleness, kindness, benignity, sweetness, moral excellence, amiability, generosity, and philanthropy.

¹ Gal. v. 22-23.

These graces are not arranged in any natural order or groups, as Paul has done in the Galatians. They are all involved in "goodness;" and hence the Apostle says, "The fruit of the Spirit is in *all* goodness." This grace penetrates and pervades the whole nature of man, mellowing all that may be harsh and austere, and comes out as the cluster on the branch, representing and answering to the life-giving and motive power of the Holy Ghost within. "Ye shall know them by their fruits."¹ It is evident that the Apostle is placing the Christian graces, which goodness represents, in antagonism to the dark and malignant passions which he condemns among the heathen. The fruits of the Spirit are the inner possession and the external garment of the children of light, in direct opposition to the unfruitful works of darkness. It must not, however, be assumed that this Christian goodness is a soft thing, a hot-house plant, a virtue

¹ Matt. vii. 16.

dwelling only in kings' houses, and unfit for the roughness of every-day life. It has an edge and sharpness in it; it is righteous indignation in the breast of a man of God reproving and repressing sin. Did not Christ exemplify this grace when he drove those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money, by a whip out of the temple, equally as when he received the poor believing woman whose wound he stanchd, and as in all his gracious dealings with the suffering children of men? Even so we should firmly resist all sin, "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord and having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reproving them."

Oh! what a world this would be if all possessed and exhibited this fruit of the Spirit! The police of every country might be dedicated to the preaching of the Cross to sanctify a world; our magistrates, to the examination of our schools; our soldiers, to the peaceful pursuit of the arts, sciences, or the cultivation

of the soil; our Navy converted into merchantmen; and the British Senate might give some of its time to the measures which would tend to cement the brotherhood of nations.

2. *In all righteousness.* Righteousness is the pre-eminent characteristic of the Christian religion. A great effort is being made at the present time, when the whole world is awake to religious questions, to make men believe that the Church of Christ, from a very early period, has misread Paul, and more especially in the prominence which, as many think, he gives to the doctrine of righteousness. Our fathers taught, and we thought that we were justified in teaching, that righteousness, as the word is used in the Pauline writings, is the key to his theology. We do not consent to be allured, we do not believe that we shall be driven, from this old position which Apostles, Reformers, and Puritans have defended in the citadel of faith.

The word righteousness, looked at as cover-

ing, if I may so speak, the ground between God and the sinner, where, be it observed, Paul finds its place in the great spiritual superstructure of doctrinal teaching, is the exact opposite of condemnation.

As condemnation is the gate to death, and is death eternal if it should be unreversed ; so righteousness is the gate to life, and is indeed eternal life. The Holy Spirit filling us, must not only convince us of sin ; but, to carry out the work which the Lord assigns him, He must also convince us of righteousness, of our destitution thereof, and of its being in Christ and of Christ for us who believe. When we are justified by faith in Christ, we are righteous. He is "the Lord our righteousness." "Of God He is made, unto us righteousness." "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."¹

There is also a righteousness of life flowing from a righteousness of character as justified

¹ Jer. xxiii. 6 ; Rom. iv. 5 --v. 19 ; 1 Cor. i. 30.

in Christ. It is referred to in such words as "your members as instruments of righteousness." "Servants of righteousness."¹

We rule ourselves by divine law, and in all relations of life, and every act, strive to be right. How often we see a defective sense of moral obligation, a tendency to do wrong, to be covetous, and to act in other ways condemned in the Gospel. A good man, constrained by the love of Christ, seeks to honour and please Him by a circumspect and holy life,—seeks to be righteous, holy, upright, with a keen sense of moral obligation, avoiding the very appearance of evil, knowing that the fruit of the Spirit is in all righteousness.

3. *And in all truth.* A charge has been preferred against Christians in heathen countries, and also on the continent of Europe, in the hearing of the writer, of a defective sense of the sanctity of truth. Without dwelling on this, it may be observed that the Apostle ad-

¹ Rom. vi. 13-18.

dressed such words to the Early Church as these—"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another." "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."¹

The fruit of the Spirit is in this truth of speaking, and in all truth. It is in a wide sense opposed to all insincerity and dissimulation. "Let love be without dissimulation." It is truth of mind, of thinking and feeling, of word and conduct; it is perfect sincerity. "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile."²

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth in this twofold sense; He fulfilled the promise of His lips; and He fulfilled the wider promise of His Name, as the Truth. Christians following and honouring Him will speak the truth, only the truth; will neither colour or exaggerate it. Whatsoever the name Christian, which we

¹ Ephes. iv. 25; Col. iii. 9. ² John i. 47.

bear, means and promises, whatsoever is implied in our being filled with the spirit of truth, into which He will lead us if we cherish Him, *that* we must pray and strive to be in the deepest, widest, highest sense—"For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.



CHAPTER III.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”—Rom. viii. 16.

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”—Gal. iv. 6.

THE resemblance between these Epistles of Paul—the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Galatians—is striking and definite. There is a resemblance in the general tone, thought, and language, and there are many special coincidences. The two Epistles also abound in parallel passages. These things were to be expected in letters written to different churches and about the same time, by a writer of such well-defined views, broad Christian sympathy, and intense devotion to the truth, as the Apostle Paul. And possibly this striking resemblance between the Epistles may have been owing, in a measure at least,

to the fact that as Galatia was a Roman colony, the literature, modes of thought, forms of unbelief, and legal and social customs would be the same in this colony as in the imperial city. In nothing do the points of resemblance in the two Epistles appear so marked as in their treatment of the doctrines of justification by faith, adoption, and the work of the Holy Spirit. In both of them the author defends the doctrine of grace, which was objected to by the Jews, as stated in the Romans, because it threw the mantle of Divine love and mercy over the poor penitent Gentile; and which was repudiated by the Galatians even after they had professed themselves saved by the Divine favour.

Again, in both Epistles the possession of the Holy Spirit is regarded, and insisted upon, as essential to the existence and nurture of the Christian life. In the one the author says, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye

now made perfect by the flesh?¹ Greater prominence could scarcely be given to the Spirit; for just as Christ is the author and the finisher of our faith, so the Spirit is the quickener and perfecter of our spiritual life. In the Romans even more emphatically is the Spirit's work proclaimed and insisted upon. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."²

One is accustomed to turn almost involuntarily to the Gospel of John, or to the Acts of the Apostles, for authoritative utterances on the Spirit's work. This, no doubt, is well. But we should add to this excellent habit, the study of His work as set forth in Paul's Epistles written to and read by intelligent, thoughtful, busy men.

1. In considering the witness of the Spirit, it is needful to examine first our present state of mature sonship. "The spirit of adoption," the free, happy, filial spirit of believers under

¹ Gal. iii. 2-3.

² Rom. viii. 9.

the Gospel, is placed in contrast to the spirit of bondage under the law, and wholly opposed to the spirit of the world. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." This is clearly affirmed of the state of a believer under the Gospel, as distinct from a believer in the Old Testament.

Formerly, a person in bondage to the law, because of the variance between its precepts, and his heart and the acts of his life, experienced apprehension and anxiety before God. "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto faith which should afterwards be revealed."¹ Those who were thus being brought slowly to Christ by the law as a schoolmaster, under tutors and governors, differed nothing from a servant, though undoubtedly they were the heirs of God. The law, as a strict master, brought them to Christ by searching the heart, by imposing heavy

¹ Gal. iii. 23.

burdens, by demanding a perfect obedience, by condemning all failure, and therefore by destroying all hope. This was the spirit of bondage producing fear.

The spirit of adoption, which distinguishes us as believers, comes in connection with our justification by faith in Christ, and with our personal possession of eternal life in Him. It marks our conscious entrance upon a spiritual liberty of heart from the guilt and power of sin, from fear, and from ignorance of God's fatherly character. The spirit of adoption affects and elevates our tone of soul and heart, and is the law and condition of forgiven and happy men, buoyant with life and hope. As regenerated persons we directly enter upon the spiritual life of God, are really become of divine extraction, are living spiritual beings after His own kind; and there flows from this a clearer and fuller knowledge of God as a Father, accompanied by a higher measure of filial love and confidence towards him.

In both the letters already referred to, their

author conclusively proves that our spirit of adoption, and all which our adoption implies, is a consequence of the death of Christ. In the Romans the Atonement is discussed in the earlier parts of the Epistle. It suited his argument to delay the introduction of the work of the Spirit until, after having discussed the profound thoughts of our being spiritually dead, buried, and raised with Christ, he could discuss with greater clearness and force our absolute safety, and progressive sanctification by the Spirit. But in the Galatians the same argument which covers so much ground in the other letter, and which forms so valuable a contribution to our views of the salvation of Christ, is compressed into one passage—"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." This Spirit of mature sonship is then a spirit of freedom of filial love, of confidence, of great peace, of buoyant, joyous spiritual

life. God is our covenant Father, and all things are ours.

2. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the realness of this spirit of adoption.

The witness of the Spirit is much misunderstood. Christians bear in their own hearts the evidence that the divine life which they have received constitutes them the children of God. "These things I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life. He that believeth hath the witness in himself."¹ Many cannot explain the change of which they are the subjects when born again of the Spirit, who yet have no doubt of the realness and blessedness of such a change. Nothing could be easier to an opponent of the truth than to perplex them by a series of questions on its nature. The young man born blind, when perplexed by the Jews by enquiries as to the character of Christ, answered, "Whether

¹ 1 John v. 10-13.

he be a sinner or no I know not: one thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see."¹ So Christians, though but imperfectly informed upon the nature of the work of the Spirit in regeneration, have indubitable evidence of it within, and are, as a result of the change, full of joy of heart.

Many persons who are themselves ignorant of Christ, having no experience of His grace and love, cannot understand our views and feelings in relation to Him; like a very celebrated French naturalist who was often surprised at hearing persons speak of the surpassing beauty of nature. At eighteen years of age, standing on a hill, with a beautiful landscape before him, he incidentally borrowed the glass of a friend; and looking through it on surrounding objects, he burst into tears. He had never known or realized his defective vision till then. On the other hand, the true feeling of sonship confirmed by the witness of

¹ John ix. 25.

the Spirit may be counterfeited by persons laying claim to the gift of the Spirit, to new light, raptures, experiences ; and all these may be mere feeling or excitation of the mind, little better than a caricature of the Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. They err in making the Holy Spirit the immediate object of sense and sensation. This is not so, nor is this the way He works in us. Our spirit of adoption is of the Spirit's creative power. It may be in dimness and feebleness apart from, and before, *the witness* of the Spirit. Still it is there, and we know it, though experience warrants the conclusion that it is not known by all clearly. The second, the advanced stage, the fuller manifestation of the Spirit to us in the truth and through the truth, makes the thing certain to us ; a real, blessed, luminous, comforting experience to the soul. This I take to be one side of the meaning of the passage in the Romans, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

The parallel passage in the Galatians is thus given :—" And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." In the Romans the Spirit, as a witness, proves our sonship. In the Galatians, the presence and witness of the Spirit in our hearts is a consequence of the fact that we are sons already. There is no contradiction here between the two Epistles : the one passage is but the complement of the other, and they express together both sides of a great truth. The form in the Galatians is attributable to the whole fact of our sonship having been alleged, and partly discussed, before Paul proceeded to deal with the inward cry or witness of the Spirit.

How does He bear testimony with our spirits to our adoption ? The evidence is in itself two-fold : first, there is an internal evidence of our sonship in the thoughts, convictions, and feelings of our hearts. " I know whom I have believed." " He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." This is

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undoubtedly evidence which offers a real contribution to the solution of the question, though not to be trusted in as sufficient of itself. To this, secondly, is added and with it combined the testimony of the Spirit of God *with* our spirits.

1. He does this first by means of the truth. Our inward experience of God's grace towards us in Christ, corresponds in some real measure with the gracious promises of Scripture made to all who believe in Christ, and are His children. These promises bring to us in their realization, spiritual intelligence, calmness of mind, a deep knowledge and experience of the truth, with peace and joy. We have and feel all these—at least to a certain extent. Our spiritual life, which we know comes from God in regeneration, in all its vicissitudes of flux and reflux, warfare and peace, effort and repose, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, resembles, though, alas, very poorly, the pure and lofty life of the Christian as the Holy Spirit has delineated that in the holy Scriptures. We

prove ourselves by this standard. We compare ourselves not with ourselves, but with the Scriptures. We studiously go and learn what they mean, looking into the perfect law of liberty, comparing ourselves with the moral and spiritual image of God's Son, to whom He is conforming us ; and though we are far, very far from His perfection, we are yet like Him. This is the witness of the Spirit by means of the truth, and by insisting upon this as a thing of happy experience in the believer, we cannot be fairly charged with enthusiasm or fanaticism.

2. There is another way in which this witness is borne by the Spirit. "God hath sent forth the Spirit *into* your heart." The passage in the Romans admits that He may do this *within* our hearts by means of the truth. The one just quoted from the Galatians affirms that He does this *within* our hearts. His presence within us changes hopes into convictions, and surmise into perfect knowledge. I am not pleading for any mere magical

coming or acting of the Spirit in our hearts, but I plead for this in close scriptural connection with our belief of the truth, and our faith in Jesus Christ. Holding in our mind and heart the truth of promise and of doctrine as God's mind, the Holy Ghost being also within us, He lifts that truth into a clearness where every word glows with meaning and quivers with life. It has then to us a force and a splendour, as borne in upon us by Him, which in hours of severest study and most enlightened criticism we never knew. This is also accompanied by a freedom, rapture, and elevation of soul not common to our religious experience. In reading the Prophets, the Gospels, the history of so much love and mercy, the Epistles so replete with profound views of salvation, or in hearing this Gospel preached, have we not felt that the Spirit brought in, and unfolded to us, the treasures and beauties of the word, the infinite depths of love in the Father, the loveliness of Christ's character, the preciousness of His blood, and

the transporting hope of heaven. In these two ways, first by enabling us to see the correspondence between our new spiritual nature given to us of God, and the truth which authoritatively describes true Christian character, and secondly by Himself entering with the truth into our hearts and therein witnessing with our spirits, He witnesseth to our adoption.

3. The result of this combined testimony is affirmed to be a filial spirit. "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His son in your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The epithets here applied to God are one in meaning. The one, "abba," is Aramaic; the other, "father," is Greek. The words are supposed to be part of a very old prayer. The Jews who spread over the cities and countries of Europe, retaining the older word, "abba," long consecrated in their prayers, combined with it the later one, "father," because of the power which the Greek language was gradually

gaining over them. They are thought to have been retained by Paul in this relation to each other, in addressing the Churches composed of Jews and Greeks, as symbolical of their union. There were different tongues, but one Lord, and one faith, and one God and Father. This view of his reason for retaining the words in their connection seems warranted by the use which Jesus Christ made of them in His passion: "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me."¹ How appropriate on His lips at that moment when, as the representative of the race, He united in Himself by descent from Ruth, and also from David, the Gentile and the Jew.

They well express the sentiment and feeling of God's children to which the Holy Spirit, through faith of the Gospel, has formed us. Abba, Father, is the language of our deepest love, responding to His love for us. We love

¹ Mark xiv. 36.

Him because He first loved us. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."¹ The Spirit of the Bible and of God's children is love. God's providence, whether bright or gloomy, whether securing for us a prosperous voyage or permitting a stormy one, driven with the wind and tossed, is all love, and we love Him in it all. "His mercy seat is the throne of love, His covenant the treasury of love, the Redeemer the Trustee of love, the Spirit the earnest and seal of His love, and we love Him in all. Our prayer is the cry of love, our praise the offering of love, our work and worship the homage of love."

The words are an invocation. "The Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The word rendered "*crying*" denotes earnest and importunate prayer; so that the words may fairly be regarded as representing the spirit rather than the language of prayer. "They shall cry unto the Lord because of the

¹ 1 John iv. 8.

oppressors, and He shall send them a Saviour and a great one, and He shall deliver them.” “The hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”¹ Evidently the Spirit has been given to aid us in prayer—given to secure by His witness a holy freedom and confidence in our Father’s love; and also to help our infirmities and stir up our souls as we supplicate for more grace. Are the prayers of our churches, or our own private prayers, marked by earnestness—crying, Abba, Father? The beggar who seems by the manner of asking an alms not to care whether he obtains it or not, will hardly excite our pity and compassion. God has given us everything that pertains to believing and successful prayer. Some reader may say, “Would that I could have this witness in my heart, and this gracious helper

¹ Isaiah xix. 20; James v. 4.

in prayer!" Why not have Him at once? Why have you not Him now? "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." We receive the Spirit not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."¹ We thus lead you to the Cross of Christ; to the heart trust and confidence in Him and His work which the Bible requires.

By faith we have Christ, and therefore all things. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." But if you accept the truth, Christ will come into your heart as the atonement for sin, the revealer of the Father,

¹ Rom. v. 1-5.

and the giver of the Spirit. For "as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."¹

¹ John i. 12-13; iv. 10.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A SEAL.



CHAPTER IV.

“In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”—Ephes. i. 13.

THREE separate and distinct views of the place which the New Testament assigns to the Holy Spirit in His work in the believer have been already before us. These are, first, the believer being filled with the Spirit; secondly, the fruits of the Spirit; and thirdly, the witness of the Spirit. The next view which, in the order decided upon, is to be taken, is the work and indwelling of the Spirit as a Seal. This part of His work in the inner life lies close upon the margin of that in which He has been described as witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God. This witness, as was shewn, consisted, first, in the likeness and harmony between our inward Christian experience, and the portrait of the Christian which

is drawn of him by the Spirit in the Scriptures ; and, secondly, in the application of the consolation, and of the strengthening and elevating power, of such Scriptures on the inner experience of the soul. Besides this, and somewhat kindred to it, the Spirit has a work which is called sealing the believer in Christ. Some deeply interesting views of this subject are suggested in the letter to the Ephesians. Having spoken of the inheritance believers have in Christ, the author adds these words : “ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation : in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”¹ This passage is especially important as to the order of time in which the soul is sealed : “ *After* ye heard the word of truth ; *after* that ye believed.” There is also the relation of the believer to Christ, as apprehended or contained by Him as the head :

¹ Ephes. i. 13.

“*In whom* ye also were sealed.” These thoughts naturally lead the way to the declaration of the great truth that the seal is the Holy Spirit: “Ye were sealed *with* that Holy Spirit of promise.”

In this passage, which affirms that the sealing of the soul in Christ follows upon believing, the author gives an exceedingly full and luminous definition of the Gospel. It is the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; that is, the revealed system of mercy which is apprehended and cordially received by the human mind and heart. The thoughts and affections of the infinite love of the benignant God are embodied in a written word which is, as it has descended to us, His divine revelation. This word has absolute truth for its essence. The truth is God's own thoughts, or the thoughts which may have come simply from the human mind of the writer or speaker, and truthfully reported or written, so that it is, in this sense, all true. To say that the Bible contains the word of God, as if it contained

some things which are not so, seems somewhat like a subterfuge of the rationalist of the present day. The special truth of the Gospel as an exhibition of grace in Christ is, upon the testimony of believers, most perfectly adapted to all the necessities of their case. It reveals God as just, and it reveals Him also as being reconciled in His Son our Saviour: it affirms Him to be pitiful to the meanest creatures of His power and providence, whilst it also affirms Him to be rich in mercy, and abounding in grace to His sinful, but penitent and believing children. This word, whilst it declares our present state of pupilage and probation to be one of great and many trials, assures us of final and complete victory in Christ, and of a world hereafter of conscious rest and glory. Hence the Apostle calls it "the Gospel of your salvation," goodness, glad tidings of great joy; holding out a complete deliverance, and promise of safety from all the penalty and dishonour of sin, with a title, the safest of all titles, to an inheritance.

The same writer, as he contemplated his personal interest in Christ's work, calls it "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God;" and again, he represents it as that through which—by the facts and doctrines of which—Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light."¹

It is according to the order laid down by the Apostle, that, after hearing and believing this truth, after it has done its work in us, so saving and gladdening, we are sealed. We are sealed by the Spirit, not as unbelievers, but as believers; not in the first act of our faith as, when beholding the Lamb of God, we rejoiced in the pardon of our sins, but *after* that we believed. The things are distinct in nature and time. As the secret work of the Spirit in our conviction of sin, and our regeneration necessarily accompanies, if not precedes, our faith in Christ, there must be two aspects of His work now before us, in our being saved, and

¹ 1 Tim. i. 11; 2 Tim. i. 10.

in our being sealed. "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."¹ The whole work, the gift of the Spirit, and of grace, and the existence of a saving faith, is supposed to be ours when God seals us with His Spirit.

There is a very important passage, bearing on the descent of the Spirit upon the first believers in Ephesus.² When Paul came to this city he found twelve disciples of John, who, like Apollos, were only acquainted with John's baptism of repentance, by whom they had been directed to look for the Messiah upon whom they believed. It seems astonishing that they should say to Paul "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." They must have known that the Old Testament speaks frequently of an outpouring of the Spirit; and must, as believers in the

¹ Ephes. ii. 1-8. ² Acts xx. 1-7.

Saviour whom John preached, have been consciously or unconsciously the subjects of this influence ; yet they did not at that time know that the outpouring of the Spirit had actually taken place. This seems to point to two aspects of His work in their case, for the Holy Ghost immediately came upon them, this latter manifestation of the Spirit corresponding to the sealing in the words long subsequently addressed to them, "In whom after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." But even more clearly on this point are our Lord's words as reported by John: "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."¹ The Lord had just recognized their faith. They had faith, but it was very poor

¹ John xiv. 16-17.

and weak ; they did not just then know the way to heaven. Moreover, they had and knew the Holy Spirit in a measure ; for in knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ, and loving them, they had the Spirit in His earlier operations, but not yet as the Comforter, nor in the more advanced view of His indwelling given in the words “ye were sealed.” They had life, because they had the Spirit before Christ was glorified : they were to have life more abundantly when the Holy Spirit should be poured forth by Christ after He should be glorified. There is no information in the Scriptures as to the time which must, or does, elapse between believing the Gospel, and being sealed in that belief by the Spirit. The case does not seem to admit of this, because it depends much upon the moral attitude of our souls. If we have received the truth very heartily, and are guided into its deep meaning by the Spirit ; if we believe it with the heart as well as mind, until its light glows within with a deepening radiance, its life pulsates with a fuller volume, and

Christ becomes so enthroned upon our affections as to fill us with calm peace and rapturous joy, then, whether this be sooner or later after our conversion to God, we shall be sealed with the Spirit. Many of Christ's disciples are chargeable with little faith, who receive the truth, but hesitatingly; who believe in Christ, but, as it were, with a half-hearted trust; and who have no bright assurance of their acceptance in Christ, and are therefore often in doubt as to whether they are of the happy number who are sealed in Him. Here, as in so many other aspects of our Christian life and experience, the Lord seems to say to us, "According to your faith be it unto you."

II. We are sealed *in Christ*. The form "in whom," that is in Christ, occurs in the first chapter of the Ephesians no fewer than thirteen times. The faithful are in Christ Jesus. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the for-

givenness of sins, God will gather together in one all things in Christ, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, in whom we trust, believe, and are sealed. The whole system of the gracious and glorious Gospel has Christ for its centre. Every truth, doctrine and fact, blessing and promise, gather and grow around Him. His own truth reveals Him to our minds, the facts of the Gospel and later Apostolic teaching describe Him, all spiritual blessings flow from Him, and all promises have their foundation and worth in His mediatorial work. Here at least in this Gospel, of so much love and mercy, which bears upon its front and on its every page, the glowing and indelible impress of heaven, He is first and last, the beginning and the ending, the author and finisher of our faith. He is standing between His Father and us, loved by us both. In receiving the word of the truth of the Gospel of our salvation, we receive Christ; in believing it, we believe Him. By faith our souls seem to come to Christ, to fall into His hands, to be laid on Him as on a

foundation, to flee to Him as to a refuge, to be washed in His blood from sin, to share in His life, and to be so encompassed by Him, and robed in His righteousness, as if inclosed by Him as a defence, and animated by Him as a life. Being thus in Christ we are sealed with the Spirit, assuring us of our interest in His atonement and righteousness, and of our fair certified title to the inheritance to which God has begotten us again in Him. There can be no sealing us, either as an assurance to ourselves, or as securing us from evil as God's inheritance, except as we are found in Christ. Every one who is in Him is, no doubt, secure; yet the assurance of this is made to depend upon the strength of faith.

III. The uses and worth of a seal are at once obvious to all. Nothing was regarded as quite safe in the East without it. Seals existed in great variety, and were frequently worn on the person, either as signet rings on the hand, or suspended from the neck. Letters, parchments, caskets, doors of rooms, and entrances

to tombs were sealed. The object sealed was fastened first by some simple ligament, over which was placed some well-compacted clay to receive the impression of the seal. In purchasing a field of his uncle's son, Jeremiah signed the deed of purchase and sealed it.¹ The chief priests, by the express permission of Pilate, made our Lord's sepulchre secure, sealing the stone, which had been placed at the opening, and setting a watch.² Another use of seals was, as in the case of a sign-manual, to stamp the name of the owner on any document, decree, door, box, or any other thing to which it might be desirable to affix it.

When George IV. was too ill to put his sign-manual to the numerous documents which required it, a fac-simile was engraven on a stamp and impressed in his presence on these documents.³ So the Holy Spirit is a seal, and with Him God seals us, first, to preserve us, and, next, to impress upon our nature the

¹ Jeremiah xxxii. 9.

² Matt. xxvii. 66.

³ Kitto's Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature, vol. iii. 802.

name and image of our owner. I have been unable to discover any custom peculiar to the Ephesians which might have suggested the repeated use of the figure to the Apostle's mind. There are, however, several allusions to the same thing in other passages of Scripture. Speaking to some, who doubled the Lake of Galilee to find the Saviour, upon the questionable nature of their motives, He said, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed."¹ God stamped His approval upon the Man Christ Jesus, by the miracles He did, and the divinity He displayed in His life. The Apostle Paul designates the Corinthian believers, "The Seal of mine Apostleship."² My apostolic ministry has its confirmation in your turning to the Lord, as any document has the confirmation of its truth in the seal

¹ John vi. 27.² 1 Cor. ix. 12.

attached to it. In another passage,¹ which may be consulted, the same idea is more elaborately explained, shewing us that the anointing of the Spirit replenishes the inner life with grace, which, like sacred oil, enriches and beautifies us, and establishes us in Christ ; at the same time the Spirit is a seal assuring us of this, and confirming us in its enjoyment ; whilst He is also an earnest of still higher attainments.

Only one other passage need be referred to on this point: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal ; the Lord knoweth them that are His."² His knowledge of His people is perfect. The foundation of great public buildings in ancient times had stamped upon them, by a large seal, long inscriptions indicating the purpose of the building, or, it is said, inculcating some lesson. These two inscriptions, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and "Let every one that nameth the

¹ 2 Cor. i. 22.

² 2 Tim. ii. 19.

name of Christ depart from iniquity," are intended—the former for our encouragement, as well known by God, and known to be His people; and the latter, for admonition to backsliders, and to those who are chargeable with careless walking before God.

2. It is as believers that we are sealed. As well-compressed clay, or melted wax, receives and retains the impress of the seal, so the inner man, the hidden principle of the newly-created soul, receives the seal of the Holy Ghost. We have most heartily received the Gospel of Christ, which has most deeply impressed and moved us. The heart is, in Scripture phrase, penitent, relenting, subdued, soft, confiding, and loving; and therefore ready to receive and retain the seal. The Holy Spirit is Himself the seal in the hands of God, who is the Sealer, for the words are "in whom ye were sealed *with* that Holy Spirit of promise." The Father seals us in the Son with the Holy Spirit. It is too much overlooked that the Spirit is in the Father's hands,

who impresses Him as a seal on the religious sensibilities of our souls. The Apostle very carefully describes Him in His moral purity, the *Holy Spirit*. He is so designated, not that purity is an essential element of His essence, any more than of the other persons in the Trinity, but rather because His mission is to counteract all sin, by an exhibition of the sufferings of Christ for it, and also to reveal the death of the Cross as the source of our pardon and sanctification, and in this way to carry forward in the human spirit the work of "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." His essential nature as holy, must characterize the seal, image, or impression He makes and leaves within us. This is called the image of God, "the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."¹ The new creation of the Spirit is unto fulness of knowledge and truth, to which the Holy Spirit leads it slowly but

¹ Colos. iii. 10.

certainly. It is to this image, in which as believers we are renewed, the Apostle referred when he said, "Having this seal the Lord knoweth them that are His." He knows His children, recognizes His own image and likeness. A nobleman who had deposited the deeds of the family estates in public offices or private hands, would at a glance know his own seal or sign-manual. The farmer who had bought corn in the market, and sealed the mouth of the sack, would without difficulty recognize the seal when next time he saw it. In this way God knows us as His own. The seal also secures our safety. It cannot be broken, but remains a token of our preservation in Christ. In the splendid imagery of the apocalypse it is written, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in the foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of Israel."¹

¹ Rev. vii. 3-4.

How often in passing through a forest we have seen "the axe laid unto the roots of the trees." But not to all the trees; "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;"¹ the others which were spared were marked or sealed. In like manner, the Hebrews, by divine direction, "took the blood and struck it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-posts of the houses"² wherein they eat the passover. This divinely appointed seal was seen by the Angel of Death, and he passed over these sealed doors the night on which he smote the first-born in the land of Egypt. Hence Paul says to the Ephesians, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."³

Seals are probably more respected, and therefore more secure, than anything else in the East. Misers have been known there to place under the care of persons whose integrity was more than suspected, bags of money and

¹ Matt. iii. 10.² Exod. xii. 7.³ Ephes. iv. 30.

other valuable articles, with apparent confidence, because the bags were sealed. For most purposes, when we have set our seal to any document it is irrevocable, until the law or the conditions under which we signed are changed. God, when He accepted us in the beloved, and named us in His will, decreeing to us, as members of His family, and joint heirs with the first-begotten, the inheritance of glory, seals us to this end, and that seal cannot be broken. Whoever bears God's image, will be borne home safely to His bosom. Letters sealed, addressed, and of great worth in the commercial world, of deep interest in the scientific world, or very precious in the family circle, sometimes miss their way by being thrown into the wrong bag, or by slipping into other and larger documents, or by being overlaid and overlooked in the post-office; they may thus be carried round the world, but by our excellent postal arrangements they generally turn up again, and reach in the end their proper destination. They might, however, be stolen, even though

at the time in the custody of our Government. So the children of God may miss their way, and wander like David, Peter, and others, in forbidden paths ; be lost to sight and be forgotten by their Christian brethren ; tossed long up and down on the stormy ocean of life ; but they will land safely at last on the happy shore of eternity, because sealed by God with the Holy Spirit. No power can surreptitiously pluck them out of His hand. On the other hand, all persons will be "*hurt*" by sin, Satan, and the second death, who are not sealed in Christ. These, alas, bear another image than that of God. They are, as the servants of sin, compelled "to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads."¹ Jesus Christ, by the Spirit who seals, can erase this mark, and completely change the nature of every one that looks to Him as the Lamb of God, as the dying thief did, so that he may pass over at once from the company of those that are lost, to be saved and sealed in the Saviour.

¹ Rev. xiii. 16.

THE SPIRIT AS AN EARNEST.



CHAPTER V.

"That Holy Spirit of promise which is an Earnest of our inheritance."—Ephs. i. 14.

"God hath given the Earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."—2 Cor. i. 22.

"God, who also hath given unto us the Earnest of the Spirit."—2 Cor. v. 5.

PAUL is the only writer in the New Testament who represents the Holy Ghost as an Earnest of Heaven; and even his use of the phrase and doctrine is confined to the passages which are placed at the head of this chapter. In the Ephesians it immediately follows the representation of Him as a seal in God's hand, who seals believers for security and recognition. When we are so sealed with Him, and attain to the assurance of our acceptance in the beloved, the Spirit Himself becomes, by His indwelling and graces, the earnest of heaven. This passage is one, and the last, of a series which

describes the most costly and valuable spiritual blessings which God bestows upon us in Jesus Christ. The author had dwelt, in the third and sixth verses of the chapter, upon certain benefits which God the Father has conferred upon us, such as the gift of all spiritual blessings in Christ, election, and predestination; in the next five verses, from the seventh to the twelfth, he refers mainly to blessings which Christ brings to us by His redemption; and in the next two verses, the thirteenth and fourteenth, there follows naturally a brief account of some things which God the Holy Spirit does for us as a seal and earnest. This simple analysis of this passage serves to shew the exceeding value of the Spirit's work in us; for though the gifts of God the Father are unspeakably great, and the blessings which flow to us from the Son's redemption far transcend our knowledge, yet those which are revealed to us, and wrought within us, by the Spirit, are worthy of being added to them, and when so added, enhance their peculiar value.

As thus connected with the three persons in the Trinity, they are all blessings of a primary character. One of these connected with the Spirit is what the Apostle designates an earnest of heaven.

1. *We are the heirs of a spiritual inheritance.*

It is quite consistent with the present economy of mercy that we should enjoy some of this whilst on earth, and before we are put in full possession. In a verse (11) preceding that in which the Spirit is described as this earnest, the author alludes to this inheritance, only so far as to bring it into sight, as one link in the marvellous chain of blessings in the second group which flow from the Son's redemption, and as completing his brief pregnant statement of our Lord's redeeming work. Many things in the divine purpose, and in the history of the world, preceded Christ's personal mediation, prepared the way for it, and passed over, through His work, in blessings upon our souls. All previous grace, all divine and merciful plans, purposes, and actions of the divine mind

in the ages that are past, gathering round the sublime events of His life, passion and death, have become interwoven with His work ; and the outcome of all the Father's purposes, and the Son's redemption, is this spiritual and eternal inheritance.

We were originally members of a disinherited race. The inheritance under consideration was the rightful possession of the Lord as the only-begotten of the Father. As to our interest in it, it lay under a forfeiture, and we were treated as aliens. Though it descended to our Lord, the Son, as a free donation from the Father, He had to redeem it for us from under the forfeiture, and hence it is called not only "*an inheritance*," but also "*the purchased possession*." It is also a merciful part of the plan that it should, at least for a time, be vested in Christ as trustee for us. In Eden the inheritance of life was vested in the first man, who lost it to himself and all his posterity. God, in repeating this federal arrangement, took care that the forfeiture should never occur

again, by vesting it this second time in His Incarnate Son, whom He made strong for Himself: and it is upon this arrangement that we are the heirs of God and the joint heirs of Jesus Christ. The inheritance is God Himself. What is Christ's inheritance with whom we are joint heirs? The psalmist says, speaking in His name, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:" finishing his address in these words—"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."¹ *God* is also our inheritance, and *heaven* is the place where mainly and most perfectly we shall enter upon its full and undisputed possession and enjoyment. This is our estate; not ours for years merely, but for eternity. It will then be subject neither to corruption nor violence. It cannot be spoiled by hostile invasion, as the earthly Canaan often was; nor wrung from us by power; nor won

¹ Psalm xvi. 5-11.

by law ; nor mortgaged by debt ; nor injured by public calamity ; nor changed by acts of Parliament ; nor violated by death.

Heaven, with its freedom from sin, sickness, pain, the curse, and death, is ours in reversion. "In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also."¹ Valens the Emperor threatened St. Basil that let him go whither he would, yet he should neither by land or by sea, be safe from his power. "Well," said the good man, "be it so : for all the Emperor's rage I shall be either *in heaven* or *under heaven*." When a certain Cardinal threatened Luther, saying "that for the noble Reformer there should not a place be left in all the empire of Germany where he should be free from danger," "Oh," said Luther, smilingly, "if earth cannot keep me safe, heaven shall."

¹ John xiv. 2-3.

II. *The Spirit is given to us as an Earnest of this splendid inheritance.* 1. It is supposed that the word and its use came to the Greeks from the Syrian and Phœnician merchants, just as the words “tariff” and “cargo” came to England from Spanish merchants. The technical sense of the word signifies the deposit paid by the purchaser on entering into an agreement for the purchase of anything. The identity of the deposit with the full payment is a very essential consideration in the force and use of the word. In many of the rural districts of Scotland, and possibly in other places, a shilling, or small sum of money, is put into the hand of a servant when hired for a certain work as handsel-money, and as a pledge that when the whole work is done the whole wages shall be paid. Two things, therefore, seem to be included in the meaning of the word used; first, that it should be the same in kind as the fulness of which it is a part, and, secondly, representing our present state as Christians, it affirms the certainty of

our privileges in this world and the next. As God Himself is said to be our inheritance—as we are said to have the inheritance in Christ—so the Holy Ghost is Himself the earnest of it in our hearts. It is not a work which He delegates to another ; nor would it suffice to say that any one blessing, such as pardon, life, or peace, is the earnest of heaven—it is the Spirit Himself only. In His person, given to each of us believers, as indwelling in us, “ For your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you ;”¹ and in the graces with which He adorns this mean temple, He is the earnest of heaven.

2. The earnest is thus *part* of our future inheritance, and identical in kind with it. An infant has a title to an inheritance which has descended from his deceased father ; and though not legally, or in fact, in possession, except as under tutors and governors, certain advances are made from it to conduct his education, and in this way foretastes of it are

¹ 1 Cor vi. 19.

given to him. As he passes through the family mansion, forests, and fields, and meets with the servants of the estate, he has in this walk, and in the loving respect of faithful dependants, an earnest of what he is speedily coming to; and we can imagine how his breast, as heir, would heave with excitement on *the eve* of possessing the inheritance. Paul felt all this, only in relation to a higher possession, when he said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."¹ This experience of the earthly heir may help us, as an illustration, to understand our present enjoyment of "the first fruits of the Spirit," which, upon the testimony of the Apostle, we now have. The Apostle having said that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," adds, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within our-

¹ Philipp. i. 23.

selves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”¹ These first fruits are our adoption, the divine nature which has been produced in our souls, and eternal life. To take the last blessing, eternal life, it is obvious from both our Lord’s teaching and that of His Apostles, that in all the essential elements of eternal life we are equal to “the spirits of just men made perfect.”² We form part of the same family—the one redeemed now in heaven, the other also and equally redeemed, still on the earth. Life in heaven is just our spiritual life here, excepting the amplification and elevation which death as a freedom from the body, and from the fretting power of sin, will confer upon us. Hence the Holy Spirit, of whose first fruits we thus speak, is described by our Lord as being in us as “a well of water springing up *into everlasting life*.”³ This very image is carried forward, and remains unruffled in its surpassing beauty by the trans-

Rom. viii. 22-23.

² Heb. xii. 23.³ John iv. 14.

lation of ransomed souls to heaven, for there "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto *living fountains of waters*: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."¹ The water of life springs up in our hearts in connection with the fulness and witness of the Spirit, only because "The river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb,"² and comes to us in Christ, whose priestly and royal work is here symbolized. Death, a suspension of our physical organs, will not cut off our glorified spirits from this supply. There is this difference between "them that sleep in Jesus" and ourselves: with us abide faith, hope and charity; faith for them is turned into vision, hope into fruition, whilst love is free from the freezing influences of earth; faith with us is still eagle-eyed, seeking to pierce the veil, and look within, hope is still acting as an anchor within the

¹ Rev. vii. 17.

² Rev. xxii. 1.

veil, and we are often compelled to confess the coldness of our love. But He who is the author and finisher of our faith, who is our hope, and who loves us even as the Father has loved Him, "of whom the whole heaven and earth is named," will gather together in one all things in Himself, *both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.*¹ But even now we are one family. Our joys are theirs who have gone before. We are "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."² The veil which from the frailty of our mortality falls still over us, has been lifted up in their case. But is our citizenship not in heaven? Have we not, in the words of Moses, "days of heaven upon the earth."³

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, soaring in thought to heaven, and being desirous to elevate the thoughts of his readers "to look at the things which are not seen," thus expresses his views:—"Having therefore,

¹ Ephes. i. 10; iii. 15.² Heb. vi. 12.³ Deut. xi. 21.

brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”¹ Our entrance to this is *now*; and it is an open, free entrance *by the blood of Christ*. We are risen with Christ. “God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”² We are the heirs of a wonderful inheritance, which is not only coming to us, and soon, but part of it is dispensed already to us; and though pent here in the body, and engaged in the sharp struggle with evil, we are not far from home. The first fruits of the Spirit are ours; the full, ripe harvest waves like yellow corn along the ripened field. The earnest most assuredly is, on this shewing, ours.

¹ Heb. x. 19-21. ² Ephes. ii. 6.

Again, how vivid is the writer's conception of the likeness, and indeed identity of the earnest to the whole in his view of the nearness of believers on earth to heaven. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."¹ The Saviour had told us that the kingdom of God was within us: this author informs us that it is all round about us; it touches us on every side—we are constantly touching it. We are *come* to it. Our walking with God by faith, our redemption and peace through the atonement of Christ, and our possession of the Holy Ghost has brought us into the very midst of the great host and household of the living God. Portions of this inheritance are ministered to us in advance. True it is but twilight yet with

¹ Heb. xii. 22-23.

us. But as the sun is seen from the lofty Swiss mountains to throw forward on the distant peaks his rays, as skirmishers before an army, to announce his coming, so our present foretastes of heaven, the earnest of our inheritance, calm, intelligent faith in the Lord, love to Him and to His people, and our luminous hope cast as an anchor within the veil, testify that the day, in which there shall be no night, is at hand. All these experiences are pledges of our immediate admission into heaven when we die.

3. The earnest of the Spirit, which is thus a real part of the inheritance of heaven, is *only* a part of it. There is no principle, or fixed rule, by which we could define the proportion which it bears as a part to the whole. A handful of wheat offered by the farmer in the market as a sample to the purchaser of the entire crop, though identically the same, bears a very small proportion to the whole. We may safely infer that the earnest is less than the whole. The Spirit who Himself is the

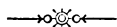
earnest, with all the grace and love which He is pleased to bestow upon our souls, is but a part. No sooner do we come calmly and logically to this conclusion, than we start back at the thought of anything being greater than this earnest. All the blessings of which God kindly thought and devised for us in eternity; which cost the Redeemer His life to secure and bestow as the efficient cause of our salvation, and which the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to reveal, are undoubtedly involved in this earnest. How stupendous a thought that something greater, and how much greater! awaits us when we shall see God. It may be said that even here we have God, and what more can we have in heaven? But there He will be our God without any of the deductions made for our present imperfections and actual transgressions. It may be said that we have joy which is unspeakable and full of glory; but there we shall *enter into the joy of the Lord*. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but

then shall I know even also as I am known.”¹ Here we know God and Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, which is life eternal ; but there we shall have vastly extended powers, and increased susceptibilities. “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is.”² This earnest is ours *until the redemption of the purchased possession* ; then it will be lost in the enjoyment of the whole. We have two pledges of our reaching heaven given us by God—Christ’s presence there where He has promised to receive us ; and the Spirit’s presence in our heart who has sealed us unto the day of redemption.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² 1 John iii. 2.

ON GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.



CHAPTER VI.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”—Ephes. iv. 30.

WE have now to consider certain views of the Holy Spirit and His work somewhat in advance of the views hitherto propounded. His personality and deity have naturally forced themselves upon our attention in discussing His operations as a Witness, as an Earnest, and as a Seal. But His personality, implied in many aspects of these operations, is clearly affirmed in the words placed at the head of this chapter, because they attribute to Him the emotion of grief. Many persons who deny the deity of the Son are consistent with themselves in denying also the deity of the Holy Spirit. They believe that He is only a divine attribute, said to be sometimes the *wisdom*, but more frequently the

power of God. If this view of the Spirit were consistently applied as a principle of interpretation to holy Scripture, its language would become altogether unmeaning. For instance we read, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost *and with power.*"¹ By the impugnors of His personality these words must be read thus:—"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with *the Holy Power and with power.*" Again, the Apostle speaking of the character of his ministry at Corinth, declares that it was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."² On the new principle of interpretation suggested, this would read, "in demonstration of *the power and of power.* "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, *but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost*, and in much assurance."³ How meaningless and unlike the terse style of Paul to make him say, "*but also in power, and in the Holy Power.*" There are many other passages of Scripture in which *power* and the

¹ Acts x. 38.² 1 Cor. ii. 4.³ 1 Thess. i. 5.

Spirit are thus connected, and which are simply unintelligible on the supposition that the Spirit is merely an attribute of God. If merely an attribute, what possible meaning can be attached to Peter's words addressed to Ananias, "Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?"¹ How could a person lie to, or wilfully deceive, an attribute?

The attributes and actions of a free person are ascribed to the Spirit. He has intelligence, affections, and will. As to intelligence, we read, "The Spirit *searcheth* all things, yea, the deep things of God."² His love as an affection is thus alluded to by Paul:—"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for *the love of the Spirit*, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."³ Here the fullest and most solemn reference to the Redeemer is coupled with the love of the Spirit, as the combined

¹ Acts v. 3.² 1 Cor. ii. 10.³ Rom. xv. 30.

source of their salvation, which the Apostle brought to them in a ministerial character, in an appeal, the most sacred and tender, for an interest in their prayers. And as to His *will*, it is written, "The wind bloweth where it *listeth*, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : *so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*"¹ In addition to this view of his character, he is said to speak, to help our infirmities, to lead, to testify, to reveal, to search, to bestow divine gifts, to work in us, to quicken thought, and dead souls, to sanctify, to come into our hearts, and to take His departure from them when displeased, to delight in us, to be vexed and grieved. Moreover, He appeared at a very critical period of the history of the early Church to originate and guide a movement in missionary operations to which Europe ultimately owed the Gospel. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, *the Holy Ghost said*,

¹ John iii. 8.

Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I have called* them. So *they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost*, departed unto Se-lucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.”¹

The New Testament Scriptures invariably ascribe to Him the attributes which in other places, and relations, they ascribe to God the Father. He is the Eternal Spirit. He is omnipresent from whom we cannot flee either to heaven, or to the uttermost parts of the earth, or to Hades. Every thing is known to Him, for He searcheth all things. He is the Spirit of holiness, of truth, of grace, of power, and of glory. He is the other Comforter; united with Father and Son in the formula of baptism our Lord has left us, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, *and of the Holy Ghost*.”² So in the apostolic benediction in which the pastor gathers up all that has been pleaded in the Church’s prayer and promised

¹ Acts xiii. 2-4.² Matt xxviii. 19.

in God's word, and with which he dismisses his flock to mingle again in the cares and strifes of the world, the Spirit is joined with the Father and the Son ; " The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and *the communion of the Holy Ghost*, be with you all."

We then can have no doubt, notwithstanding all that the impugnors say, of His personality. The Lord Himself, and His Apostles teach this with a fulness and a clearness which, if we are to be guided by the grammatical meaning of words, amounts to demonstration. He is within us who believe, a constant, resident, mighty benefactor whom we are in some danger of undervaluing. It may be doubted whether the Church of Christ has uniformly remembered the place our Lord assigns Him in relation to Himself and His Father in the dispensation of the grace of God. The Church has ever laboured to exhibit the infinite grace and mercy of the Father, whose long-suffering has spared a

guilty world, whose boundless and spontaneous love surrendered His dear Son to suffer for it. No less earnestly has the Church striven to testify to man the love of Christ to him even as a sinner, as seen in His incarnation, life, death, and present intercession. Too much, nay, enough, cannot be said upon the love and grace of either of them to us as sinners. Is it not equal condescension in the Holy Ghost to have loved us? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son;" "The Son loved me and gave Himself for me." The Spirit comes forth from the Father and the Son, from the purity and blessedness of heaven, to do what? actually to enter, and work in our poor, polluted, selfish, worldly hearts, and to dwell there. We have never yet honoured, revered, and loved the Spirit as we should have done the last and highest manifestation of Deity.

As a divine person He may be grieved: "*Grieve not the Spirit of God.*" The word translated "*grieve*" is very frequently applied both

to God, and to men. In the Old Testament, it signifies "to cut," as to cut wood; and therefore when applied to our feelings it would mean "to cut to the heart." Pain, of body or mind, is also expressed by it. "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and *it grieved Him at His heart*"¹ So the forgiving brother, afflicted at the grief of his guilty brethren, said, "Now therefore be not *grieved*, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."² They were cut to the heart. The word is rendered in our authorized version sometimes *grieved*, *displeased*, to be *sorry*; but in all cases it implies deep anguish or sorrow of heart. In the New Testament the Greek word translated "*grieved*," and which is the perfect equivalent of the same word in the Old Testament, occurs more than thirty times. We have no difficulty in understanding the application of it *to our own case*; but how

¹ 1 Gen vi. 6.

² Gen. xlv. 5.

can *the divine mind* of the Spirit be grieved by our coldness, unbelief, sin? The Godhead is calm, holy, free from mistakes, and cannot be ruffled, because absolutely free from alterations, disappointment, or weakness. The force and meaning of the word will be seen by applying it first to *Jesus Christ*. Once "He looked round about on the multitude with anger, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts."¹ Here, as in many other instances, a distinction is made between *anger* and *grief*. His heart was wounded by their conduct, as their friend, and not perturbed as it would have been had He been their enemy. In secret and silence He had often suffered and wrestled with evil; though often also His internal life of prayer and communion with His Father was tranquil. At times He would even reveal to His disciples the painful emotions of His soul. He had been accessible from the beginning to sorrow for sin and death, as in the case of unbelief

¹ Mark iii. 5.

referred to, and when He groaned in His spirit and was troubled at the grave of Lazarus, mingling His tears with those of the orphan sisters of Bethany. All this, however, though very painful, was little more than a preparation for the fulness and strength of sorrow and suffering in the garden when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."¹ All this He felt as the Redeemer from sin, but He also felt it as a pure loving friend who, as Emmanuel, God with us, both comprehended and mourned over our unbelief and danger.

As He was filled with the Holy Ghost, and as each had the most perfect sympathy with the work of the other, we can understand from His case, *how the Spirit is grieved*. He is concerned about our good as our friend, and loves us. Love can be grieved. Sinners cause His indignation; erring children cause Him grief. And when we do things towards Him which are fitted to grieve a wise, loving, earthly

¹ Matt. xxvi. 38.

friend, He is influenced by them and acts towards us as a friend who is greatly grieved. This is the view of the subject which the Apostle gives us somewhat in detail in the letter¹ from which the words at the head of the chapter have been selected.

It is very important to know how we grieve Him, in order to guard ourselves against it. A careful study of the argument of the Apostle, which prepares the way for the exhortation under review, will at once shew how the Spirit is grieved. Having spoken of the condition of those who are alienated from God, in contrast with the condition of those who are reconciled to Him, and who have "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," he proceeds, addressing the latter class, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down

¹ Ephes. iv. 25-29.

upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers, *and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.*"¹ It is not concealed that *some* of the members of this Church had been more or less addicted to such baneful practices, previous to their change of heart, and were still in the midst of their old evil companions and temptations. Moreover, we all have, as Christians, the seeds of evil still within us. It is said of the excellent John Berridge that, seeing a criminal pass to execution, he pointed to him and said, "There goes John Berridge, but for the grace of God." He only meant to say that the seeds of evil, which are "in our flesh," would develop into all

¹ Ephes. iv. 17-30.

wrong doing but for the subduing and restraining grace of God. This fact is sufficient to justify the earnest and startling words which the Apostle addresses to believers. All lying is put away when we carefully and conscientiously abstain from all misrepresentation, exaggeration, simulation, dissimulation, prevarication, and all manner of deceit; to this must be added the high reverence for the sanctity of truth which is so deplorably wanting in all heathen populations, and not always observed in favoured Christian lands. Heathen moralists thought that lying might be justified on certain grounds; the inspired Christian moralist says, "Speak every man truth with his neighbour." Anger as a passion is to be kept rigorously within certain bounds. The heart must not lodge it after sunset. Turning to our enemy the devil, we are to strive, by ever realizing our standing in Christ, not to give him a foothold in our hearts. So far from stealing, or appropriating in an way to ourselves what belongs to another, we are to make

restitution if we have wronged any, and to labour diligently in our calling to be able to relieve the physical wants of the hungry and the naked. And the noble faculty of speech must be laid under tribute to minister sympathy and succour to the distressed. Watchfulness against these evils which the Apostle condemns, and which we ourselves have condemned by our grateful submission to the authority of Jesus Christ, honours and pleases the Spirit.

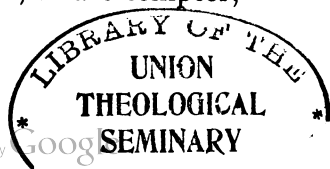
Every thoughtful mind can furnish reasons why we should not grieve the Spirit. There were reasons of a personal character which would at once suggest themselves to the Ephesians, and which it will be well to glance at. He had watched over them, the Apostle could testify, as a kind, patient, and loving friend, with infinite wisdom and tenderness. He had quickened every one of them from a death in trespasses and sins, created them anew in Christ, and delivered them from the influence of the prince of the power of the air, and from the sinful course of this world. He had sealed

them as heirs of heaven, and dwelt in them as the earnest of their future inheritance. They had access by Him through Christ to the Father, and were built together through Him—through His grace and power for an habitation of God. They were strengthened with might by Him in the inner man. He had united them in one happy spirit. He had filled their hearts, and adorned their Christian profession with His fruit which is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. They had been urged by Paul's teaching to submit themselves to His mighty influences, that thereby they might be filled with His life and purity and power. They were to be sanctified and cleansed by Him with the washing of water by the word. In a striking passage,¹ borrowed from military tactics, He puts God's word as a written revelation into their mind and heart, as a sword of great execution in the fight of faith. And over all, as the innumerable and invisible bands

¹ Ephes. vi. 17.

of the Christian armour, knitting it so closely that not a chink shall be left through which the fiery darts of the wicked can pierce the Christian soldier, is the spirit of ceaseless prayer and supplication, which He inspires and sustains. To these different aspects of His great work must be added that one which the Apostle but hints at in the words quoted already—“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God *whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*” These are reasons of a personal character which shew, with overwhelming force, why the Ephesians should not grieve Him.

The argument thus put, and which must have had great weight with them, has equal force in our case. For we, in common with the whole Church of Christ, owe all faith, hope and love to His work as revealing the Redeemer. The motive thus suggested why we should avoid all that is displeasing to Him, and do all that may please Him, and glorify Him, should be irresistible with us. If ever we should yield to anger, to deceit, to the tempter,



to corrupt trifling speech, to wordly conduct, it must be in utter forgetfulness of our deep indebtedness to this tender and heavenly friend. We may possibly remember with inexpressible sorrow the desolateness of our hearts when He, grieved at our sins, hid His face, and withdrew from our hearts for a season. Great anxieties, deep darkness, fears, humblings of heart, and possibly deeper falls may have been the sad consequences of our grieving Him. The argument thus drawn from the Epistle to the Ephesians only, could easily be extended by a reference to any other Epistle, or to any of the Gospels. But, though it might be extended, it is a question whether it could be made stronger or more impressive to a devout mind than Paul puts it here, and therefore I leave it.

A question has been raised between two schools of theology as to the moral aspect of the argument of the words at the head of this chapter. Some affirm that the words are an appeal to gratitude, others affirm that they are

an appeal to fear. The latter school argues thus :—" For in what would issue the grieving of the Holy Spirit, if not in quenching His testimony, and causing Him to depart?" This argument, if pushed to its logical conclusion, would prove far too much, because, if the *only* issue of grieving Him is the quenching of this testimony, then, as all do grieve Him, that testimony is quenched in all. But no one, so far as I know, believes this.

Those who say that the words are an appeal to gratitude argue, that they confirm the doctrine of our abiding in Christ for ever, because the Spirit seals us, is an earnest in our heart of heaven, and confirms us and keeps us unto eternal glory. Our hope of glory, and our preparation for it, and the security as to our possessing it when we die, are all His work. Besides this, not one word is said as to apostasy from the faith, only as to grieving the Spirit as a friend ; so that it seems the appeal is not to fear, but to gratitude. We owe Him all. He has illumined our darkness, breathed life into our

dead souls by revealing Christ in His redemption, and He comforts us in tribulation, counsels us in perplexity, leads us into all the truth, and produces in us, and in our Christian profession, the fruits of holiness.

His love and perpetual sunshine in our hearts constrain us to love Him in return. His defence, covering us with the armour of righteousness and light, excites our confidence and gratitude; and therefore our prayer and effort should be not to grieve Him. It would wound us beyond what words could express to grieve a dear, loved, earthly friend; how can we fill with sorrow Him who has sealed us unto the day of redemption?

ON QUENCHING THE SPIRIT; AND ON CHERISHING HIS INFLUENCES.



CHAPTER VII.

“Quench not the Spirit.”—1 Thess. v. 19.

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.”—2 Tim. i. 6.

PAUL’S first visit to Thessalonica was memorable for its brevity, and for the marked success which attended his preaching of the Gospel. On landing in Europe and proceeding to Philippi, which was a Roman colony, it is seen that in his congregation and experience the Roman element predominated. But upon his reaching Thessalonica it is as clearly seen that the divine prerogative of preaching the Gospel to the Jew first and then to the Greek, holds good on European, no less than on Asiatic ground. The Apostle of the Gentiles goes

first to the synagogue of the Jews. So also it held good that the Jew on this, as well as on that side of the sea, in Europe as well as in Asia, hardens himself against the Gospel. Guided by his profound respect and reverence for the divine prerogative, and also by his well-known zeal for the salvation of his countrymen, he “as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you is Christ. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas ; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”

In this early missionary visit we meet with ample evidence of the accompanying power of the Spirit in his ministry. For though the success was limited among the Jews, the defect lay not with the Apostle nor with the demonstration

¹ Acts xvii. 1-4.

of the Spirit, but in the defective susceptibility of Paul's countrymen. This is clearly seen in the great success of his preaching among the Gentile idolaters. The ignorance, the mental degradation, and the moral darkness of the wretched heathen worshipper of idols, yielded before the convincing light, and the quickening life of the Holy Spirit; whilst the prejudices, the pride, and the self-righteousness of the Jew repelled and resisted Him. As his visit was limited to three weeks—*"and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures"*—the success in planting this Gentile Church must be admitted to have been unusually rapid and extensive. He confirms this view, and fully accounts for it, in ascribing all the success to the power of the Holy Spirit. "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction,

with joy of the Holy Ghost.”¹ And again in exhorting to purity of life, and demanding respectful attention to his inspired directions, he said—“ He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.”² And finally he addresses them in the words placed at the head of this chapter as possessed of the Spirit, though they were in danger of quenching His influences. This solemn exhortation, “Quench not the Spirit,” seems to carry in it also an appeal to cherish His indwelling and influences, and therefore it will be well to connect with the appeal to the Thessalonians, the appeal by the same writer to his son Timothy:—“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.”

I. The important enquiry, what gifts or influences of the Spirit do believers quench, requires our first attention. The majority of biblical writers agree in saying that the refer-

¹ Thes. i. 5-6.

² 1 Thes. iv. 8.

ence is in part to His miraculous gifts, and some go so far as to affirm that the reference is exclusively to them. But let the following things be considered in opposition to this latter view. As a Church collectively "The Gospel came to them not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost. They received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost." Here are His ordinary and constant operations in clothing the preached word with convincing and saving power, and in leading souls into peace and joy in believing. He was in them as the author and sustainer of their faith, and of all the graces of the humble believer. He filled their heart also as the efficient cause of their sanctification extending to their entire nature: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹ Though He is not named in this prayer, the work

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23.

which revelation ascribes to Him in the purity and preservation of the faithful is here described. His dwelling in them then as a power and for a joy, as the Apostle declares, and as carrying forward the work of their inner purity, giving the renewed spirit conquest daily over the *flesh* which is a great life-force for evil in the soul, is incontrovertible evidence that, whatever may be the reference in the passage, "*Quench not the Spirit*," to His miraculous gifts, the reference is equally, and I think principally, if indeed it be not exclusively, to His ordinary gifts.

His inhabiting their mind was an evidence of their election of God.¹ He was in a deep sense the author of their justifying faith, the seal of their title to a glorious immortality, and the source of a very pure joy to them in the midst of the trials, afflictions, bereavements, and persecutions of life. All this flows from His grace, or, as it is called, influence, in the

¹ 1 Thess. i. 4.

heart, illumining it, sanctifying it, and comforting it, and feeding the flame of piety and love that glows within. Coming as the Spirit of wisdom, truth, power, comfort and love into the heart crushed by trial, cold by contact with the unfriendliness and infidelity of the world; helping our infirmities in prayer; and bearing witness to our sonship, He must be allowed to fill us with thoughts, feelings and aspirations which, under His constant presence and influence, will ripen into the higher Christian life, which is attainable even in the body, and ultimately into the intellectual and spiritual eminence already attained in glory by the "Spirits of just men made perfect."¹

II. It is a startling fact, which we are forced to infer from the words of the Apostle, that these influences of the Spirit may be quenched by believers. How is this ever done? A distinction must be drawn, and guarded, in discussing this practical and serious enquiry, between

¹ Heb. xii. 23.

grieving and quenching the Spirit. The former, *grieving*, is affirmed of Him as a person, the latter, *quenching*, can only be affirmed of His gracious acts, operations, and movements in the soul, through the truth of the Gospel. He does strive actively with us and within us, acting through and upon our powers which are now delivered from the dominion of sin, and ennobled by the spiritual principles of faith, love, hope, and obedience—causing us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and enabling us to bring forth fruit unto righteousness and eternal life, corresponding to the divine principles which He has implanted in our nature. For us to think, or feel, or desire a thing which would hinder Him in this work, or to act so as to bring in the breath of the cold world, or the withering touch of sin, or the brood of wordly or sinful thoughts which assault our hearts, and which are as destructive to our piety as the little foxes were to the vines, would act upon the interior work of the Spirit in the instruction, sanctifi-

cation, and comfort of the soul, much as water would act upon a fire. The Spirit was represented by the fire which burned perpetually on the Jewish altar. It pleased Him to assume at Pentecost the appearance "of cloven tongues like as of fire," which was in keeping both with the prediction of His character and work by Isaiah as "the Spirit of burning," and with the promise of John the Baptist that "He, the Lord, shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."¹ Fire may be quenched by pouring water upon it, or by heaping wet wood or other wet substances upon it, overlying and extinguishing the dying spark, or by neglecting a timely supply of proper fuel. A somewhat different aspect of the same fact is given in the words of the Evangelist, speaking of the patience and tenderness of Christ towards weak disciples, "And smoking flax shall he not quench;" and again in the request of the five foolish virgins, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps

¹ Isaiah iv. 4; Matt. iii. 11.

are gone out.”¹ To plunge the smoking flax in water would quench it; and to extract the oil from the lamp would quench its light. The influences of the Spirit in us may also be quenched, at least for a time. I say for a time, because the holy Scriptures draw a distinction between our quenching His operations and influences within us for a time, and even finally, and *His expulsion from our hearts*. In a fire on the hearth where the fuel is burned out, and the flame extinguished, there still remains a heap of coals in which the living spark lies buried, and may therefore with prompt and proper measures be revived. The sun, given to the world, never ceases to shine even in the cloudiest and stormiest winter day, but remains for us as the great fountain of natural light and heat and life, though he is hidden from us, and His rays quenched, in a measure, to our feelings in the cold and frost. So, as we read the Scriptures, though much of the influences of

¹ Matt. xii. 20; xxv. 8.

the Spirit may be quenched in us, yet He Himself is not quenched, nor has He wholly withdrawn from us. Jeremiah and Hosea in the Old Testament, and Paul's Epistles in the New, with such individual cases as the backsliding of Peter, and the lukewarmness of the Church at Laodicea, may be referred to as confirming this conclusion. The child of God though he fall, is not robbed of all the faith, and love, and hope which has been wrought in him by the Spirit, though it is a mournful truth that the vigour of faith, the lustre of love, and radiancy of hope may be shrouded in deep darkness. There is faith, but what a feeble hold it has upon the Saviour. There is love, but how faint and cold. There is hope, but how little is the comfort and elevation it brings to the sorrowing soul. Those graces in us may be so low, so overlaid by evil and grief, as to be said to be quenched, and yet the merciful Spirit is near. He will punish us, and yet will perfect that which concerns us, because His mercy endureth for ever. "*Then will I visit*

their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."¹ This conclusion receives probably its brightest exemplification, and strongest confirmation, from the description of the Spirit's work in the believer, as connected with the part in our salvation which belongs to the Father, and the Son, respectively, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

The operations and influences of the Spirit then are quenched, in the way thus explained and guarded, by indulging evil tempers, or by magnifying and brooding over earthly cares, when they are allowed to rage and run riot in our hearts. Trifling company with its vain, frivolous and foolish conversation, against which the Scriptures warn all, especially young Christians, is perhaps more hurtful, because

¹ Psalm lxxxix. 32-34.

less suspected, than any other influence to which our piety may be exposed. Our physical powers are sensibly affected by undue fatigue, bad food, impure air, and disease; in like manner our deathless nature is affected by evil powers within and without us. The heart, in a spiritual sense, has its weakness and its sleeping intervals. As the body must have proper nourishment, and plenty of it, without which it becomes an easy prey to deleterious influences, so the divine birth in the soul calls imperatively for suitable nourishment—strong meat, or the sincere milk of the word. If it ask bread, and you give it a stone; if it ask an egg, and you give it a scorpion; you not only injure its strength and life, but you aim a blow at Him who has revealed Christ in you.

III. But there is another side of this serious and practical subject—how may His influences be cherished by us? This question is answered, at least in part, in the exhortation which the Apostle addresses to Timothy: “Wherefore I put the in remembrance to stir up the gift of

God which is in thee." The word that is translated *stir up*, may be read, *stir up with new fire*, the meaning being evidently to blow up and keep alive a dull fire. The word *bellows* and *fire*, form the compound word that is translated "*stir up*." The presumption in the case of the Thessalonians, in Timothy's case, and in our own, is that the fire is burning. To be put upon our guard by the exhortation, as we needed to be, against a course of conduct that might have quenched the fire, acts upon us as a command of love to feed the flame, and to stir it up by meditation and prayer. "Our soul," in the words of a Puritan divine, "is biased Godward." "We love God because He first loved us." "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee ; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night ; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love

thee.”¹ To these proofs of this bias of our souls to God, I would add, and earnestly commend as a study, Paul’s state of mind in the Epistle to the Philippians.

Every one who fully understands this inclination of the soul towards God is fully conscious of what would quench, and what will cherish the influences of the Spirit. Everything which is agreeable to us thus inclining to the Lord, and clinging to Christ with purpose of heart, must be equally agreeable to the Holy Spirit ; and therefore as we, waiting upon God, seek to stir up the fire, the Spirit will assuredly respond to this effort and give us more grace. As in the means we use, and the many separate methods we have recourse to, in the use of our eyes, our hands, and our feet, our speech and our brain, for the preservation of our life and the increase of our comforts, God is pleased to co-operate with us ; so the Holy Spirit graciously accommodates Himself and His operations

¹ 1 John iv. 19; Psalm xlii. 2; Isaiah xxvii. 8-9; John xxi. 17; Philipp. i. iii. iv.

to us in our efforts to be found of Him in peace and blameless. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."¹

There are two methods of stirring up the gift of God that is in us—of cherishing the influences of the Spirit. The one is by prayer. The reflective aspect of prayer is thanksgiving for help received—the gathering up in a grateful memory proofs and kinds of help, which embolden us to present new and enlarged requests for blessing. As we open our hearts in prayer with the language of a trembling and lowly confession, they become emptied of self and self-dependance, when, as they are open, and the spirit crieth and thirsteth for God, the wind and the fire of heaven rush in to fan and feed the flame of spiritual life. Prayer thus based upon the great name of the Son of God, with the plea of His precious blood, cannot be de-

¹ Philipp. ii. 12-13.

nied. We pray most fervently *for the Spirit Himself*. I am perfectly aware, and would urge that this point should be kept constantly in mind, that He was bestowed on the Church at Pentecost as a personal and permanent gift. But we have seen in previous chapters that He may be in us in less or more fulness and power. The principle on which we pray for Him now is this—we may, and do daily, pray for more of that which we already possess. Moreover, the question seems to be set at rest by the promise of Christ. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”¹ We pray for Him when we ask Him to come into our hearts and bring more grace; to reveal Christ in us, in the beauty of His character, in the agonies and triumphs of His death, in the completeness of His redemption, in the splendour and royalty of His gifts, and

¹ Luke xi. 13.

in the prevalency of His intercession for us before God in heaven. So to have and see Christ is to have the fire stirred up into a flame.

“ Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze ;
Love I much ? I’ve much forgiven,
I’m a miracle of grace.

Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I’ll bathe ;
Constant still in faith abiding,
Life deriving from His death.

May I still enjoy this feeling,
In all need to Jesus go ;
Prove His wounds each day more healing,
And Himself more fully know.”

The other duty, in addition to prayer, is the careful study of God’s word, and meditation upon it. The fuel to the fire is the word. It was as David mused upon the evil of sin, and human frailty, and remembered the eternity and mercy of God in whom he hoped, that

he said, "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue."¹ The counsel wisely and lovingly given by our Lord to the Jews was, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."² To study these living oracles, lingering long and expectantly over them, as the heathen were wont to linger at the shrine of some pagan idol, would be as if you shook the branches of some richly laden fruit tree in autumn, when the ripe fruit would fall covering the ground around you. Whether the Thessalonians were defective in this study, I cannot say; they were less devoted to the duty than the Bereans. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so."³ This nobility of Christian character gave greater breadth and depth to their

¹ Psalm xxxix. 3.

² John v. 39.

³ Acts xvii. 11.

religious views, greater strength to their faith, and more tenderness to their love. The Bereans added fuel to the fire, and stirred it up; they cherished the deep convictions of the Spirit and furthered His operations in their heart. Gaius as an individual Christian, and the Church at Philippi may be regarded as examples of this healthy and joyous state. The Church at Laodicea had for the time almost quenched the Spirit. The Church at Sardis was required by the Lord "*to be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.*"¹

We Christians of the present day cannot be ignorant of, and cannot be indifferent to the legion of enemies and influences in and round about us whose settled purpose and steady aim, is to quench the Spirit within us. Clear the decks of all that may hamper and weaken in the way of doubts, or hankering after the world, and fight these enemies, giving them no

¹ Rev. iii. 2-15.

quarter, but putting them to flight. Remember the Holy Ghost striveth and worketh in us mightily to this end. Let us do this, and the fulness of the Spirit will satisfy and sanctify all the capacities of our souls ; the fruit of the Spirit will cluster round the daily acts of our humble life a hundred fold ; He Himself will bear witness with a brightening assurance of our heirship ; He will abide in us as an Earnest and as a Seal ; whilst we shall labour by His gracious and timely aid, neither to grieve Him as a friend, nor quench Him as a fire and life in our hearts.

THE END.

